

Big Country

Haiti situation halts rescue flights

John LaNoue had big plans for his 60th birthday tomorrow, but those plans did not include cake and ice cream.

Forget the candles — LaNoue's only wish was the use of reciprocating twin-engine aircraft suitable for international operations outside of the ADIZ with Mode C Transponders, LORAN or GPS navigation equipment, and enough volunteers to crew them for a week.

LaNoue is director of Texas Baptist Men and president of TBM Aviation Fellowship. He planned to be back in Dallas by Sunday after preaching the annual campus revival at Hardin-Simmons University so that he would immediately begin practicing what he had just preached to the students about overcoming Satan with a testimony of Christian service.

LaNoue would be the coordinator of a group of Texas men flying hazardous, low-altitude search and rescue missions 500 feet over the Straits of Florida to locate Cuban refugees for the U.S. Coast Guard.

Abilene pilot Bill Masters was to be one of those pilot volunteers flying latitude lines at 125 knots covering 12,000 square miles searching for raft-sized objects to within 12 miles of the coast of Cuba. This would be no birthday party, even for pilots like Masters who has more than 14,000 hours of civilian flying time with ratings through Airline Transport, including Seaplane Instructor.

Masters and the 23 other Texas men who volunteered to go when LaNoue sent out a letter outlining the mission last August were to relieve volunteers flying with Freedom Flight International.

Colorado City

DPS trooper under fire for alleged assault

COLORADO CITY — A Department of Public Safety trooper has been taken off duty and his status is under review after his arrest Thursday on assault charges.

Trooper Robert Maldonado, stationed in Colorado City, was arrested at 11:37 p.m. Thursday and charged with misdemeanor assault after officers responded to a call at a Sweetwater apartment where his estranged wife lives, according to investigators.

Maldonado's bond was set at \$1,000, Nolan County Sheriff Jim Blackley said, but he was released on his own recognizance.

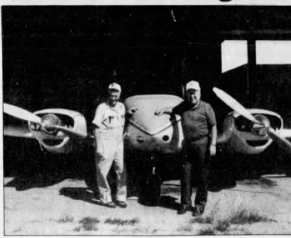
Blackley said a new charge of burglary of a habitation, a felony, was filed Friday and Maldonado was to be re-arrested. He said Justice of the Peace Ben Sasin recommended a bond of \$5,000 on the burglary charge.

Blackley said Maldonado was arrested on suspicion of aggressive assault and misdemeanor assault against two people. However, Maldonado was charged with misdemeanor assault and burglary of a habitation, rather than aggravated assault.

According to the investigating officers' report, Maldonado confronted Chad Ford, 22, about Maldonado's estranged wife, Irene. According to the report, Maldonado pulled a 9mm handgun from his waistband, grabbed Ford by the neck, knocked him to the floor and pointed the gun at his head, Sweetwater Police Chief Jim Kelley said.

The report stated Irene Maldonado then tried to intervene and "was thrown around," but not seriously injured, Kelley said.

Nancy Robinson
Ups & Downs



Abilene pilot Bill Masters and Texas Baptist Men's Aviation Fellowship President John LaNoue stand by for volunteer Cuban refugee search and rescue flights.

International. All volunteers who assist the U.S. Coast Guard are responsible for their own expenses and are required to undergo intensive training in overwater search and rescue operations.

One of the most difficult requirements for volunteers, according to LaNoue, is "the ability to not panic when the aircraft makes a low-level, over-the-waves provision drop."

"That's when the pilot often has to choose which raft to drop food and water to out of dozens of rafts loaded with people about to become victims of the sharks or the elements."

Freedom Flight International averages saving one life for every 3.2 hours one of their aircraft is in the air.

"We made it clear to the TBM volunteers what they could expect. They agreed one life was worth 3.2 hours of flying even under those extremely hazardous conditions."

After 13 years as the leader of the TBM volunteers, who have done everything from flying blankets into Iran to rebuilding the entire West Texas town of Saragosa after it was wiped out by a tornado, John LaNoue will quickly tell you God can intervene in the best of flight plans.

"I've seen it happen over and over in my 40-year ministry. What matters is that we were

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